

## **India - Papua New Guinea Relations**

India opened its High Commission in Port Moresby in April 1996. Earlier, diplomatic relations with Papua New Guinea were conducted from Suva and later from Kuala Lumpur. PNG also opened its resident diplomatic Mission in New Delhi in October, 2006.

India and PNG enjoy warm and friendly relations. The two countries have been working closely in international fora including the Commonwealth, Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations Organization.

Foreign Minister Sam Abal paid a four-day visit to India in July 2009. This was the first ever bilateral Ministerial visit between the two countries. FM Abal called on EAM, Minister of Commerce & Industry, MOS(ST), MEA and MOS for Petroleum and Natural Gas. He indicated his government's desire to strengthen political as well as economic & commercial bilateral relations, particularly in the fields of energy, education, telecommunications and IT.

Mr. Richard Maru, Minister of Trade, Commerce & Industry visited India in January 2013 to attend the Partnership Summit 2013. He was accompanied by a delegation consisting of Mr. Sasindran Muthuvel, Governor of West New Britain province and officials of Investment Promotion Agency. He held bilateral talks with Shri Anand Sharma, Minister of Commerce & Industry.

Mr. William Duma, former Minister for Petroleum & Energy was invited as Chief Guest at the Founding Day celebrations of Petronet LNG Ltd. in New Delhi on 2nd April, 2013. Mr. Duma, visited India from 30th March to 3rd April, 2013 and was accompanied by an 8-member delegation, which included senior officials of his Ministry, an Adviser from PM's office and a few businessmen. Apart from the programme organised by Petronet for delegation, including meetings with Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and visit to Petronet's Dahej Terminal and ONGC's facilities at Bombay High, Mr. Duma also paid a courtesy call on MOS(PK) on 2nd April, 2013. An invitation from the PNG Minister of Petroleum & Energy to our Hon'ble Minister of P&NG for visiting PNG has been sent and is under consideration.

As a follow-up of the visit of Minister for Petroleum & Energy, Petronet/OVL delegations visited PNG twice and held extensive discussions with State-owned Petromin LNG Holdings Ltd. and various stakeholders in the LNG sector. An in-principle agreement was reached with Petromin for India off-taking of 22.5% gas from the proposed Gulf LNG Project. Discussions were also held with InterOil and others concerned for possible Indian participation in the Gulf LNG Project.

A Parliamentary delegation, led by Speaker Theodore Zurenuoc, visited India on 26-30 August, 2013. This is to bolster Parliamentary linkages between the two Commonwealth Parliamentary democracies.

Brig. Gen. Francis Agwi, Chief of PNGDF, visited India in June, 2013 to attend the passing out ceremony of PNGDF cadet officer at the Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun. During the trip, he also had meetings with Chief of Indian Army, Chief of Indian Navy and Vice-Chief of Indian Air Force in New Delhi.

Shri Sanjay Bhattacharyya, Joint Secretary (South), Ministry of External Affairs visited Port Moresby on April 9 – 10, 2013. He held bilateral consultations at the Foreign Office with Deputy Secretary, Mr. Joseph Varo. He called on Chief of Defence Forces Brig Gen Agwi and discussed various areas of mutual cooperation in the Defence Sector. In his meeting with Amb Isaac Lupari, Principal Secretary to PM, he said that three drafts, viz. Investment, Double Taxation & Technical Cooperation will be taken up seriously and prepared for signing during future visits.

### **Aid/Technical Assistance**

India has been assisting PNG in their capacity-building efforts by way of training under Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation Programme. So far, over 300 candidates have availed training in India, including 23 PNG Defence personnel. This year, India offered 30 scholarships in addition to 4 Commonwealth Programme Scholarships. India has also offered humanitarian aid and disaster relief to PNG from time to time as it is prone to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunami, etc. As part of our Regional Assistance Initiative for Pacific Island Countries, GOI offered annual grants-in-aid to PNG for supply of equipment and material for social programmes.

### **Economic & Commercial Relations**

PNG's population is around 7 million and GDP is US \$ 20 billion. It is a resource rich country. India's engagement has progressively increased with PNG both in trade and investment. India's exports to PNG were US \$ 36 million and imports were US \$ 199.37 million in 2011-12. The main items exported include textiles, machinery & equipment, food items, manufactured goods, pharmaceuticals, surgical items, soap, washing powder, polishes paper, paper pulp, etc. These were not reflective of the actual trade since PNG imports much of Indian goods through third countries. The main imports from PNG are gold, copper ores & concentrates, timber, copra, marine products, coffee, vanilla and cocoa.

Indian companies are now progressively looking at the various projects coming up in PNG, consequent to discovery of Natural Gas in Southern Highland Province, being developed with massive investments by Exxon Mobil. Similarly, gas discoveries in Western and Gulf Provinces are being developed and Indian companies can participate in the associated projects. A consortium of Petronet Ltd. & OVL is trying for some of the mid and down-stream projects associated with these fields as well as off-take of gas. Some gas blocks are also up for exploration. So far, 3 consortium delegation visits for negotiations has taken place. An MOU has been initialled between Petromin and Petronet.

. Similarly, growth in commerce and trade, especially in Indian white goods and processed foods is likely to increase as the PNG market expands. Various agreements like Technical Cooperation, Bilateral Investment Promotion & Double Taxes Avoidance (DTAA) are under negotiations.

A Business Seminar, in conjunction with a visit of the business delegation from PNG to participate in the IITF 2012, was organised in November, 2012. The PNG delegation included officials from PNG Investment Promotion Authority (IPA), PNG Power, Mineral Resources Development Company (MRDC), Cocoa Board and National Fisheries Authority. It was also reported that Indian investors had shown interest for setting up a gold refinery in PNG.

As part of the market expansion activities during 2012-13, the High Commission organized a Seminar on India's Investment and Trade Potential in PNG at the BizCentre of the Port Moresby Chamber of Commerce and Industry on 27 November 2012. Apart from the members of the local business community, the attendees in the Seminar included officials from PNG Investment Promotion Authority, Oxford Business Group, Essar Group and businessmen of Indian origin based in PNG and Australia. Samples of Indian spices (supplied by Adani Group), basmati rice (by APEDA), Indian tea (by Tea Board) and ayurvedic medicines (by Baidyanath) were displayed. The samples were also appropriately displayed at different hired commercial spots in Port Moresby.

As part of the activities during 2013-14, the Mission organised a Business Seminar at the Chamber of Commerce & Industry on 17th December, 2013. This seminar was focussed on India's services sector. The Mission had arranged four panelists to speak on human resources, IT & ITES, education, medical services and medical tourism. The seminar elicited very good response. The Mission also organised a "India Trade Promotion Week" at a prominent department store in Port Moresby in January 2014.

### **Cultural Relations**

India Association of PNG, in association with the High Commission, celebrates a gala cultural event 'India Nite' in Port Moresby every year. In 2012, more than 600 persons participated in the event where performance of Siddhi Dhamal Dance troupe, sent by ICCR, was the main attraction. The performance was attended by political and business elite of the country and members of the diplomatic corps. The Siddhi Dhamal dance troupe also performed at the open Jack Pidik Park in Port Moresby on 28th October. This show was hosted by the Governor of NCDC and was attended by several hundreds of Papua New Guineans from all walks of life including several from the settlements around Port Moresby.

In association with the University of Papua New Guinea, the Mission organised an Indian Film Festival at the University amphitheatre from 7-12 June, 2013. The High Commissioner inaugurated the festival at which a large number of University staff and students as also members of the Indian community were present. Six DVDs provided by the Ministry of External Affairs were screened at the festival. At a separate function in March 2013, a set of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi was presented to the University of PNG Library by the High Commissioner.

At a function organised at the State Function Hall in the Parliament High Commissioner presented the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi in sixty six volumes to the National Parliament Library. Several dignitaries, including Prime Minister, Ministers, Governors, Members of Parliament, officials, invitees from all walks of life and media persons were present during the function. Hon. Theodore Zurenuoc, Speaker, in his address said that leaders in this county, as elsewhere in the world, could emulate Mahatma Gandhi's life and teachings for enhancing peace in the strife-torn world. He thanked Government of India for presenting these books which will be a "treasure for the National Parliament Library." Touching upon the excellent political relations with India, he said that people-to-people contacts have been extensive. He specifically mentioned the good work being done by Indian teachers and officials in the field of education.

In addition, the High Commission has sponsored societies for culture,

## **Indian Community**

There are about 2500 Indians in PNG working at various projects including the PNG LNG project. Other professionals include chartered accountants, university and school teachers, doctors, IT and finance, missionary workers, etc. Some Indians are also working in Government departments at middle executive levels.

The Indian Association of PNG has been carrying out charitable activity and developmental work in PNG. Similarly, Missionaries from India, including Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity are helping in social work.

### **Useful Resources:**

High Commission of India, Port Moresby website:  
<http://hcpom.gov.in/>

\*\*\*\*\*

**July 2015**